

Stepping Into Freedom!  
Galatians 5:13

Intro

When I previously taught at Butler Community College, I was a member of the challenge course facilitators' team.

- the challenge course is kind of an obstacle course designed to foster trust, cooperation and teamwork
- it incorporates some activities on the ground and also some elements high above the ground
- some of them 20-30 feet in the air
- low element like balance walk and then the wall....
- the power pole is one of the high elements and very challenging

The power pole on the Butler Community College challenge course is about 30 feet in height and has a 2' x 2' platform on top of it.

- Your reward for climbing the pole....a chance to fly 30 feet above the ground on a trapeze bar!
- And that's just the beginning!
- the difficulty in the power pole is that it is designed as a two-person challenge....
- two of you must climb the pole and stand on the 2'x2' platform on top...and then launch yourselves out on to the trapeze bar as a team or one will end up missing the bar
- can appear to be dangerous....many fear the power pole
- as a result, they miss the opportunity to feel free, flying above the ground on the trapeze bar
- when you conquer the power pole...the other elements seem to be much less risky

Our spiritual walk and our acts of service to the Lord are much like that power pole

- some of them may be dangerous...not physically but in terms of rejection, failure, ridicule....
- some of them may be physically dangerous...maybe in some mission fields...
- these situations cause real fear in many if not most people who are seeking to do the Lord's will..

But, let me share something that I truly believe....

When we acknowledge the danger – real or perceived, deal with our fears and then seize the opportunities that God presents us....we are **FREE!**

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. Galatians 5:13*

Here the apostle Paul was reminding believers of their freedom in Christ and warned against using this freedom as a license to do whatever they want.

- Rather than liberty being used for sin, the real goal should be love.
- love + freedom = service to others.....

*"I have an extra day off this week," the husband told his wife as he walked into the kitchen. "I think I'll use it to fix our daughter's bike and then take our son on that museum trip he's been talking about." "Fixing a bike and visiting a museum hardly sound like exciting ways to spend a day off," his wife replied. "It's exciting if you love your kids!"*

Let's examine the word F-R-E-E and see what it means for our spiritual walk in getting out of our spiritual Lazy-Boy and perform acts of service out of love...not duty...especially those things that tend to drive us right back into our spiritual recliners!

## R – Risk has its rewards

In her book, *Within My Heart*, Tamera Alexander writes this line about one of her characters, a possible love interest for the central character, a widow with two young sons...

*But he'd learned long ago that a life lived without risks pretty much wasn't worth living. Life rewarded courage, even when that first step was taken neck-deep in fear."*

Tamera Alexander, *Within My Heart*

The key line is >>>even when that first step was taken in neck-deep fear.

- If we look throughout the Bible, God is a God of the "first step."
- When God asked Moses to get out of his comfort zone...to confront Pharaoh and lead the people to freedom, Moses said.."uh-uh, no way Jose."
- The God of first steps asked Moses to then take a small step of faith by throwing down his staff
- what did God do with that staff? TURNED IT INTO A SERPENT
  - in Egypt, serpents were objects of worship and considered to be poisonous
- what was the first step God asked Moses to take?
  - PICK UP THE SNAKE....BY THE TAIL!
  - not the place I would pick up a poisonous snake...I picked it up at all!
- Moses learned an important first-step lesson that day...God is faithful

It is an important principle that we must learn and God made if very clear to the Israelites as they prepared to cross over the river Jordan into the promised land.

-Joshua 3:13

- it is spring, the river is flooding...the normal channel exceeded and water flowing freely
- they are ordered to cross the river....and God promises them this...

*And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap."*

Joshua 3:13 (NIV)

It is a pattern repeated throughout the Bible....

- Naaman had to go and wash seven times BEFORE he is cured of leprosy
- Gideon has to trim his army from 32K down to 300 BEFORE God will grant them victory over the Midianites
- the fish and the loaves have to be given up BEFORE God multiplies them

The reason that God asks us to take these little steps of faith before our courage is rewarded?

## F – faith grows

When we take those first steps of faith, our faith is rewarded and we begin to trust God more and more.

Our faith begins to grow through experience, not by just pure intellectual assent or by someone telling us to try harder to have more faith.

Old Faithful geyser in Yellowstone is not the biggest geyser or the most regular geyser but it is the biggest, most regular geyser. (Yellowstone.net)

-today it regularly goes off every 91 minutes

-if you have never seen it you might find it hard to believe

-if you sat and experienced its spouting for a day or two you would believe that it is really Old Faithful!

-you would get to know its patterns and habits

It is that way with God.

-we don't have to try harder to believe.

-we just need to get to know God better

-and because God is faithful, the more we get to know Him the more we can trust Him

He is very clear about this in His Word:

**Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV.** "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

**Jeremiah 17:5-7 NKJV.** "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. **Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,** and whose hope is the LORD."

**Psalms 18:30, NKJV.** "As for God, His way is perfect; **the word of the LORD is proven;** He is a shield to **all who trust in Him.**"

**Psalms 56:3-4, NKJV.** "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), **In God I have put my trust; I will not fear.** What can flesh do to me?"

Trust....trust....trust....trust...the definition of faith? Confidence or trust in a person or thing...

How much faith do you need to have? Enough faith to take the first step....

And then you get to feel what Peter must have felt as he walked on the water....

## **E – exhilaration, excitement**

*Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.*  
Matthew 14:29 (NIV)

Can you even begin to imagine what that must have felt like?

-the feeling he must have had as the water must have seemed like pavement to him

-we are not told how long he walked on water, just that he did it

-he jumped off that 30 foot power pole, grabbed the trapeze bar and swung there 30 ft. above the earth....free from gravity for the moment

I imagine Peter looking at Jesus and seeing the twinkle in Christ's eyes and the grin on his face as Peter put one foot in front of the other...

-Jesus thinking....yeah, one of them is getting it! He is trusting in me like no other!

-wow, this is so cool!

I imagine God having a twinkle in His eyes and a grin on His face as Moses finally took the first step on the road back to Egypt...full of trust

- as Noah took the first step and gathered that first batch of gopher wood to begin building the ark
- as Abraham took the first step by loading the first of many camels with his personal goods and family
- as Gideon sent the first of his troops home...
- as Jonah finally took his first step toward Ninevah...
- as the disciples took the first steps away from their boats, their families to follow His son

What new and exhilarating first step have you taken for the Lord lately?

- or are all of your first steps well behind you?
- you live in the past and relish old victories instead of seizing new opportunities to cause the Lord to have a twinkle in his eye and a grin on his face

And that is exactly what happens as we continue on with the final letter in our word FREE this morning...

### **E – escape our spiritual Lazy-Boy**

This past couple of weeks has been about getting out of our spiritual lazy-boy, taking risks.

- we all have one...
- when God calls us to go outside our spiritual lazy-boy, we begin to get a little anxious, nervous, uncomfortable
- we would prefer not to get out...it means we have to do something!

We might feel comfortable talking with church friends or family about our faith life but talking with a stranger or to someone we know who doesn't believe...ewwww

- we may feel comfortable praying for someone we know or have a relationship with but cringe at the very idea of confronting someone who has acted badly toward us...or someone else we know
- you may feel comfortable sharing past struggles or trials with others but balk at the idea of sharing something personal....a struggle you are currently going through...with someone in church even

If we languish in our spiritual comfort zone too long...we can become spiritually dead...

In the heating and air conditioning trade the point on the thermostat in which neither heating nor cooling must operate - around 72 degrees - is called "The Comfort Zone." It is also known as "The Dead Zone."  
**Russell Bishop**

The way to get out of the spiritual dead zone or your spiritual lazy-boy is by exercising the first step principle.

- that's so true in every aspect of life...not just our spiritual life
- it is what I teach in wellness classes to those who don't like to exercise
- get off the couch...take the first step out the door to a 5 minute walk...
- take the first step to quit smoking by setting a limit on the number of smokes you will have that day..
- the first step is usually the hardest...I shared that with you last week...
- I hate the first mile of a six or seven mile run...but once I get rolling....I am good to go

Take the first step when you get up in the morning...

- ask God to show you where you need to get your feet wet that day
- call someone you have been avoiding out of fear...
- share your faith with someone you have been hesitant to share with
- make a gesture of friendship to someone you may have had bad dealings with or feelings for...
- risk speaking the truth to a spouse, parent, or friend when the normal course of action would be to hesitate or avoid..

Some of these things will work out like we hope they will, some will turn out to be a failure

- but we have to have faith....trust that God will guide our paths
- God is calling us to minister and we may not know where but in obedience we must respond...

**By faith Abraham**, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup> **By faith...**

Hebrews 11:8-9 (NIV)

As Abraham took the next step and the next step and the next step...along with a few missteps, God was with him.

- David faced Goliath for God's honor but that wasn't David's first rodeo...
- he had taken the first step years before and then the next step...
- listen to David's words to Saul...

*The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.* I Samuel 17:37 (NIV)

Conclusion

*Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

Matthew 14:33 (NIV)

- worship is the act of expressing worth
- when we worship God, we tell Him He is worthy of our love and respect
- but don't think of worship as just an hour on Sunday

When we fail to share the Gospel with someone we feel God is calling us to share with....

- does that say...God you are worthy
- when we fail to speak the truth in love because of what the repercussions might be, are we telling God He is worth?
- when we fail minister to the person who wronged us in the past or has ridiculed us before, are we telling God He is worthy?

*But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.*

Hebrews 10:38 (NIV)

Scripture is very clear that God deemed us so worthy that, even while we were yet sinners, He sent His one and only Son to die on the cross for us. **HE TOLD US WE WERE WORTHY!**

picture of cross – lead into communion by sharing the forgiveness found at the cross